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Agenda item 2
Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities

Statement submitted by Association tunisienne des mères, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Tunis Declaration

We, the participants in the International NGO/Civil Society Forum on information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) organized by the Association tunisienne des mères and the ECOSOC NGO Section, to celebrate National NGO Day and as part of the preparations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the 2005 high-level segment of ECOSOC, meeting at the Technopole in El Gazala, Ariana, Tunisia between 23 and 26 April 2005 to consider the theme "For an Inclusive, People-Centred, Development- and Knowledge-Oriented — Information Society for All",

Expressing appreciation for

- The fruitful and wide-ranging deliberations of all the participants in the Forum and the solid support of His Excellency Zine Mr. El Abidine BEN ALI, President of the Republic of Tunisia, and of his Government;
- The remarkable preparatory work, strongly supported by UN-NGO-IRENE/NGO Section, by the organizing NGO, Association tunisienne des mères (ATM), coordinator of UN-NGO-IRENE/Africa, and its commitment to strengthening civil society and its contribution to the endeavours of ECOSOC towards the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, and also the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society;
- The major support given by DESA and the partnership of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Office in Tunis, of civil society and of the private sector;
- The outcomes of previous meetings held as part of the preparations for the second phase of WSIS and the 2005 high-level segment of ECOSOC, within the context of the review meetings on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals,

Recognizing that 2005 not only marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations but will also see the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration and the MDG+5 review of the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society, to which various events civil society should make an effective contribution,

Urging all partners to expend every effort necessary for the achievement of the objectives in the present document and others on ICT: the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, and partnerships and agreements relating thereto, with a view to combining their efforts into a universal and cohesive campaign; and

- To promote participatory governance and partnership;
- To use ICT and technological innovations as a significant instrument towards the effective implementation of the Goals at all levels — local, national, subregional, regional and global;

- To give consideration to the challenges, opportunities and work required in order to bring about greater equality in access and utilization of ICT by bringing new technologies into the implementation of the eight Millennium Development Goals, particularly in 2005 which marks the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations and will also see the MDG+5 review of the Millennium Development Goals and the holding, in Tunis, of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society,

We, the participants in the International NGO/Civil Society Forum, recommend that the outcomes of the present Forum should be widely distributed, and that efforts should be made in order to ensure their implementation; and we call on Governments, NGOs, civil society, the private sector and other institutions to enhance information and communication technologies in all spheres of life in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

1. We call on the Governments of all countries to:

1.1 Further their commitments with a view to increasing access to and utilization of ICT so as to implement the Millennium Declaration and the Goals; implement the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action of the WSIS; and promote the integration of its objectives into their policies, activities, legislation and development programmes, in partnership with all actors;

1.2 Promote innovations relating to ICT in the spheres of governance, women, families, children and persons with special needs, involving municipal and local authorities, the private sector and civil society, through education, ongoing and vocational training, microfinancing and loans, tax incentives, the development of infrastructures and facilities and also the management and development of financial and human resources;

1.3 Mobilize technical and financial resources by guaranteeing adequate and secure financing mechanisms; offer an environment favourable to investment and to sustainable integration of ICT in all spheres of human activity; and give particular attention to citizens with special needs: women, children, the disabled, rural populations or impoverished regions, or areas under threat of natural disasters or conflict;

1.4 Facilitate the incorporation of ICT in all aspects of participatory governance with a view to ensuring transparency and providing all citizens with a variety of effective, quality and high-level services.

2. We urge all partners to:

2.1 Promote the utilization of ICT and innovative initiatives related thereto, as well as the projects and programmes undertaken in partnership among the various actors (Governments, NGOs, civil society, private sector, the media, local authorities, parliamentarians, the international community and the United Nations), in the fulfilment of their commitments with regard to the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, with an eye to development for all and a knowledge society free of exclusion;

2.2 Deal with the cultural, ethnic and linguistic impact of ICT through diversification and adaptation of their services so as to allow them to respond to the individual and special needs of each group, through wide-ranging utilization of existing instruments;

2.3 Include human rights concerns in all programmes, policies and initiatives relating to ICT;

2.4 Strive to eradicate sexual discrimination in access to the services and financing of ICT by setting up specialized technical centres and establishing training programmes for women, children and the family, and by promoting equitable access and ensuring equal opportunities for employment in the different sectors to do with ICT;

2.5 Increase the usage of high-level ICT in distance learning and vocational training programmes, with a view to accelerating the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

2.6 Involve persons with special needs in ICT-related activities by offering training courses and easier access to information sources and develop technologies in order to provide a better quality of life for persons with special needs;

2.7 Define clearly the goals and objectives of ICT and enhance evaluation, assistance and monitoring and follow-up processes in all countries, so as to provide access to progress in the use of ICT as a contribution towards fulfilment of the Millennium Declaration and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time, we the participants invite all bodies making up the national and international community and the principal partners to:

1. Reinforce their political will and their financial support so as to translate their commitments into actions, though implementing effective, appropriate, multilateral and transparent e-strategies, policies and financial mechanisms, in order to bring about an Internet governance that will be participatory at all levels, in the interests of sustainable development and peace for all;

2. Consider efficient ICT and innovations as necessary means for implementing the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals and establishing an integrated information society for all;

3. Reaffirm international support for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Millennium Declaration, recognizing that gender equality is a fundamental aspect of development efforts, including all the efforts needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals;

4. Support a participatory approach for monitoring, regular assistance and evaluations at all levels — local, national, regional and international — of the process and significant contributions to the outcomes of the MDG+5 review;

5. Support the NGOs having consultative status with ECOSOC so that they may monitor the application of the Tunis Declaration and Plan of Action with the partners, and report regularly on the progress thereof. An international meeting would be held each year, at the invitation of various host countries, which could ensure effective implementation of the Tunis Declaration and Plan of Action;

6. Request ATM to submit the Declaration and Plan of Action to ECOSOC in the form of a Declaration of Principles in order for them to be considered for inclusion in the ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration;

7. Request ATM to distribute the Tunis Declaration and Plan of Action so that they may be submitted and presented at side-events at the WSIS in Tunis in November 2005.

We, the participants in the Tunis Forum, reiterate our intention to strive for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals and to use ICT as an effective means of establishing and building an information society that is inclusive, people-centred and oriented towards development and knowledge for all.